

Jesus & sports

November 2, 2010

On the up side, the [Texas Rangers](#) appeared in their first-ever World Series after 39 seasons of futility. As the [Dallas Morning News](#) reported the other day, prior to this year, the Rangers' most memorable moments were pitching ace (and current Rangers president) [Nolan Ryan](#) feeding batter [Robin Ventura](#) a knuckle sandwich on the top of the head and outfielder [Jose Canseco](#) bouncing a ball off his head into homerun territory.

But this year, the Rangers did what nobody dreamed possible. They won the American League West, walloped the Tampa Bay Rays and the hated New York Yankees in the playoffs, and then took on the [San Francisco Giants](#) in the [World Series](#).

Pitching rules, time heals

Unfortunately, great pitching trumps excellent offense. In four out of five games, the Giants got the better of the pitching duels. In this season, Tim Lincecum, Madison Bumgarner and Matt Cain silenced the Rangers' mighty bats. Our team lost.

Time heals old baseball wounds. So, eventually our memories will hone in on the bright spots of the Rangers 2010 season. We'll remember [Josh Hamilton](#)'s splendid season at the plate and in the field. We'll recall how pitcher [Cliff Lee](#) lived up to all expectations in the decisive series with the Rays and Yankees. We'll revel in the memory of excellent starts by [C.J. Wilson](#) and [Colby Lewis](#) and fantastic closes by [Neftali Feliz](#). We'll smile at the pleasant surprise of first baseman [Mitch Moreland](#)'s play. And I'll savor the recollectyion of excellent play by outfielder [David Murphy](#), who's an even greater guy off the field.

Dallas who?

But, of course, if time erases bad memories, we won't recall this year's [Dallas Cowboys](#). At all.

Maybe everyone was crazy from the heat, but back in the preseason, almost everyone picked the Cowboys to contend for the Super Bowl. The thought of the 'Boys becoming the first team to both host and play in a Super Bowl seemed both fantastic and entirely reasonable.

But then they had to actually go out on the field and play the game. What a horrible mess. They're 1-6, and I saw fans sitting in Cowboys Stadium with bags over their heads.

God & games

A friend from out state sees theological implications in our autumn of defeat. Moments after the Rangers lost the Series, he sent me an email.

He wrote: "How could God allow the Left Coast liberal, gay-lovin', wine-sippin', kooks of San Francisco to wallop the God-fearin', flag-wavin', boot-stompin' Texans? And with a Bush looking on?"

"Does this mean that God lives in San Francisco, wears a beret, and is more mellow than we thought? Is he sending a pointed message to conservative Texas?"

"With the Cowboys in self-destruction, this must mean the almost-end of the Texas world. Only [Baylor's football success](#) can save the state now."

Fortunately for my spiritual sanity, I don't believe God cares who wins in sports. And if God *did* care, then (a) Baylor and Notre Dame would take turns winning the national championship, and (b) soccer would be God's game. Think about the demographics: Jesus taught that God cares most for "the least of these" in the world. Soccer is far and away the most popular game among the world's poorest people.

All of this is speculation, of course. Like wondering how many angels can play rugby on the head of a pin.

But when spring training starts next February, you can bet plenty of Rangers fans will be praying for another trip to the World Series.